

Building Community

An Associate Board Spotlight: Carol Madruga

Every team needs a cheer leader. Even better when the cheer leader is a team mate who steps out to lead from the front. Carol Madruga is that kind of leader.

Her passion for nursing and creating community among colleagues fueled a thirty-year career with Mercy Medical Center. Her first assignment as a Med/Surg floor nurse, gave a wide background in patient care. From there she moved to Obstetrics. As she puts it, “I spent over 25 years in obstetrics ...and saw a lot of magnificent babies come into this world!”

Carol’s last two years in maternity, she made the discharge phone calls. As a breastfeeding specialist, she followed up to find out if the mother was having any difficulties with breastfeeding or health issues related to post delivery. “Besides making sure their (hospital) stay was good, we wanted to avoid problems. If they were first time Moms, they might not know they were having a problem. But by asking certain questions, letting them know where they could get support, it was a tremendous help. Quality follow-up care - that’s what those discharge phone calls do. They help the patient know what is normal for their situation, make sure they have their follow up appointment with the physician and that they have all their medications, to keep their healing moving forward,” she emphasized.

Almost half of Carol’s time at Mercy was spent on the Mercy Hospital Foundation board. “Mercy on the Creek” as she called it, had the intimate feel of family. “We knew every nurse on every shift... It was a camaraderie that comes with the small setting,” she reflected. It was fertile ground growing Carol’s enthusiasm for team building.

Change begets challenges. As Mercy on the Creek and Merced Community Medical Center merged, gathering together- finding ways to be included mattered.

Doris Gonella, Mercy Foundation board president at the time, asked Carol to consider ways employees and the Foundation could be mutually supportive. Mrs. Gonella had a vision to connect the employees with the Foundation. Carol had ideas. The result of their collaboration: Spirit Boosters.

Since 1986, Mercy on the Creek employees had a voluntary employee payroll deduction that went to support the hospital’s general fund. Spirit Boosters added a new twist: these are employees who make donations through a payroll deduction to Mercy Hospital Foundation. “People may have only been giving 1 dollar or 5 dollars at a time, but they were contributing. And it was a huge success!”



Carol recalled. Giving through the Foundation allowed items to be purchased that weren't included in the Major budget, but would make life easier in every department: from things as small as Irma's request from 2nd floor (a surgical floor) for an English-Spanish dictionary to blood pressure machines, oximeters, and carts to move equipment.

Employee giving directly to the Foundation has continued for over two decades. "We had other fundraisers -we asked them to donate one hour of their pay per pay period. Some people doubled that! It continued to be successful! People would see me coming down the hall and say, Oh no! She's coming to ask for money! And yet, they never said no to me!" she laughed.

"It was just fun and joyous! It really was! There were prizes and incentives for getting a fellow colleague to sign up and for every donation that was increased. It started slowly and grew. I'd been involved with it for about ten years; the annual contributions became so substantial we took pictures of the checks presented to the Foundation and posted them! When the letter of request from a department manager came to us (the Foundation Board), that request was really meaningful. The need was visible! That is what they said they needed and that's what we spent our money to buy!" she concluded.

It created a visible connection, a distinct understanding that the Foundation intended to serve the employees in all departments. Spirit boosters continue to be generous donors to Mercy Foundation. Spirit Booster Contributions over the last five years total more than 600 thousand dollars. "I'm so proud of Spirit Boosters-- of the employees - and there were a lot of them - giving to the Foundation," she smiled.



Carol attended the groundbreaking for the new hospital. The day the first shovel of dirt turned remains a vivid memory of the community coming together to build. "We were each given a vial planted with a tiny pine sapling! I planted that sapling in a little pot. Then moved it to a big pot as it grew."

May 2, 2010 marked a new beginning. The day patients were transferred from the 15th street facility to the new Mercy Medical Center, Carol recalled, "I'll never forget that day! That was fun! Everyone had a job to do. Everybody had a t-shirt identifying their job. You either put patients on the gurneys for transport or you were at the new facility accepting patients as they came in. Obstetrics was a little different. Labor is a minute by minute thing! It isn't scheduled! We transferred with our patients who had just delivered...and

other OB nurses were at the new facility receiving moms coming in to deliver. It was chaotic, successful and exciting to be in the new facility!"

“The little sapling in the pot continued to grow. We put it in the ground the day our twin grandbabies were born. That tree is now over 50 feet tall!” she exclaimed.

For Carol, it represents the nurturing required to take all the steps: leaving Mercy Hospital on the Creek, joining with the medical staff and volunteers of the 15th street hospital (Sutter Merced Medical Center), finding the passion together to build the Mercy Medical Center Merced we have today.

The sapling, now a mature tree in Carol’s front yard, tells the community’s story. A story of a dedicated team: doctors, nurses, ancillary staff and volunteers nurturing excellence in healthcare for Merced County residents.